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THE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF A MODERN MUNICIPALITY, OR LOCAL MUNICIPAL STATE.

If the question were asked, "What is the greatest product of modern civilization?" I should reply, "The National State." This term, which it is necessary one should clearly comprehend in order to realize the significance of the title "The Local Municipal State," has acquired a definite meaning in political science. We may define a nation as an aggregate of persons, the combination of whose physical and mental conditions create a community of interests. This definition is not quite accurate. Its terms would include, besides nations, smaller economic divisions. Those who have a certain definite number of interests which are common are not necessarily a nation. One may have many interests in common with several thousands of his fellow-beings, and other and different interests which he shares with many millions more. In this case the smaller body of persons is not a nation. The nation to which the individual belongs is the widest circle of persons with whom he can be said to have a community of interests. It will be perceived that I use the plural, "interests." I do so advisedly. A single common interest among an indefinite number of people does not make a nation. It is most probably true that each person in existence to-day has one or more interests in common with every other living being. With some, however, he has a greater number of interests in common than with others; while often a large class of persons will hold such relations to each other and to the rest of the world that we cannot look at the advancement of one of the members as a good until we know the effect on the others. When such a close community of interests exists we have a nation.

This renders it almost essential that the territory which they occupy should be contiguous.

A National State results when those in the nation who are sovereign, perceiving this community of interests, recognize laws whose object is the furtherance of national interests. It is at present almost universal for law to have the sanction of some political organization which is known as the government. A government standing for a nation is therefore practically essential to the existence of a National State. But what is more fundamental than government is the recognition of the existence of a community of interests, or of "the nation," on the part of those who are sovereign. By sovereign I do not mean being in official position, but holding such power in the community that what the sovereign recognizes as the law is the law for all. The sovereign power may be in one individual, in a class, or, as in America more than anywhere else in the world, it may reside equally in each citizen. Wherever the sovereignty resides, if we may use the expression, it is necessary, for the creation of a National State, not only that there should exist a community of interests among a large body of people, and that this fact should be perceived by those who hold the sovereign power, but that they should go farther and recognize laws whose object is to advance the common interests of the people as a nation.

Our own ideas of the proper divisions of the civilized world are, comparatively, so clear that we often forget how many-generations it took to develop them. For centuries after Rome fell the cosmopolitan idea of the world-state still lingered in men's minds. It was not the advance of a nation, but the subjection of a world under a single ruler which fired the ambition of a Charlemagne and the long line of mediæval emperors. The political and social as well as the religious life of man was to advance under one government. True, it was something more than the memory of the Roman Empire which prevented men from striving for the advancement of nations. Nations themselves, as well as the con-

sciousness of their existence, have been the product of the evolution of civilization. The close community of interests among a large number of persons inhabiting a definite territory, which lies back of the feeling which renders it impossible to look at the progress of one member without considering the effect upon the others, has not always existed. At the downfall of the Roman Empire the northern hordes scattered themselves among the old Latin population. The mental characteristics of each barbaric race was to a certain extent distinct, and all differed radically from the old inhabitants. The individual members of a single tribe or race were often surrounded by different interests. The lines of development common to persons living in a territory, the general physical characteristics of which, having partly produced those traits, are in all probability adapted to their further development, had not yet become distinct. The differentiation of the civilized world into nations is the result of the progress of the civilized world since the Dark Ages.

Now, at the close of the nineteenth century, the existence of nations is a fact; and, furthermore, it is one which may be said, though perhaps not in so many words, to be a fact which is fully appreciated. Except as retained in certain rapidly dying theories of political economy, we have seen the last of cosmopolitan ideas of civilization. We no longer doubt that the civilized world develops by and through the development of its great nations. A German National State, which includes nearly all the German nation, was recognized as an essential means to the further development of civilization in Germany; the unification of Italy was looked upon in the same way. A government, however, which pretended to represent Germans and Italians would be regarded as a political monstrosity. Intuitively we perceive that it would be either German or Italian—it could not represent both. There are no interests which Germans and Italians have in common, in the sense that laws could be passed

which regulated and advanced indifferently the affairs of both as of one people.

Except possibly the French, none so distinctly recognize that they are a nation as ourselves. It took years of the slow development of ideas, and finally the most stubbornly contested war of modern times, but now we can truthfully say that we are one people, not on paper, or because we live under one government, but because we are one in the minds and hearts of our people. Our National State, however, is the result of something more than a sentiment, as our nation is something more than a people under one form of government. Back of all is a distinct realization on the part of the people, who are sovereign, that as individuals they have common interests with all others composing the nation—so much for the National State.

The other great political conception, and the one which we may hope that the twentieth century will see firmly rooted in the minds of the people of our own and other countries, is what we may call, for lack of a better name, "The Local State." The terms, "Home Rule" and "Local Self-government," so popular of late, indicate a growing sentiment on the part of the people that there are common local interests, which one shares with the people of the Locality and with no one else. These interests are not local in the old and bad sense in which the term was once used, to denote the supposed interests of a particular section in national questions ; but local in the sense that the questions involved, whether decided one way or the other, affect only a limited number of persons. In other words, not local in the sense that it might be for the advantage of the East to have free raw material, but local in the sense that all the people in a particular city have an interest in its streets being well lighted, but for all that those in other cities care, the inhabitants may use tallow dips. In this sense, local issues and national issues are absolutely distinct, and by no conceivable possibility can they ever conflict.

The fact that, as an individual, each citizen has not only

national interests, but local interests, is one which is beginning to be generally recognized ; but concerning the questions what are strictly local interests, and what is the extent of the Locality, as yet, even among those who have made a study of political science, only the most general and hazy notions are entertained. In this respect, however, our ideas of municipalities or local municipal states, are much further advanced than are those concerning agricultural or mining local states. That a city is a political and economic entity, with definite interests which are purely local to the city, all will admit, though few realize, as I believe all persons will ultimately realize, that one who lives in the mining districts of Pennsylvania, or in the agricultural districts between Philadelphia and Harrisburg, resides in as clearly defined a local state, which has just as definite and purely local interests, as one who lives in a municipality. The local state, like the nation, is the result of a growth and a development. It is only in modern times that cities, as great producing centres, can be said to have existed. The early life of such cities as London and Paris was not distinct from that of the country around them ; while in the country, though different districts favored different industries, transportation was so difficult that each village was almost a complete economic world of its own. These villages, under other conditions, might have been little local states, but down to recent times the wants of the people were so few, that the only local laws which could have been passed were those relative to police. Like the nation, the local state is only developed when the changed conditions of the people result in a large number of common local interests. Perhaps the best general distinction that can be drawn between local and national interests is based upon the fact that the former are seen and felt immediately, while the latter are perceived mediately; and therefore, by logical reasoning, when our light is not good, our streets badly paved, our drainage faulty, our parks and squares insufficient, or when we have a poor police and fire system, we directly perceive the consequent incon-

venience to ourselves. The result of having a government which does not regard local interests stares us in the face. The lack of municipal convenience, and the discomfort to ourselves as individuals, as cause and effect, follow each other in close sequence. National interests, on the other hand, are those which involve the rise of industries, the struggle of class with class, the effect of the desires of the people on their condition. In the case of these, causes and effects can seldom be directly perceived; they can only be ascertained by investigation.

A necessary element in all progress is that those on whom it depends should see, more or less clearly, the general lines along which development should take place. It is this which renders so valuable the general recognition of the fact that the progress of the world must take place through the separate advance of each nation. It gives a zest, a purpose, and a definite character to national undertakings and improvements. In the same way, before our local affairs can progress satisfactorily, it is essential that the people should realize the fact that they belong to a local state, and that that local state has definite possibilities of improvement. And furthermore, if we are to preserve the existence of states in our Federal Constitutional system, we must have states which are composed of persons who have common local, as distinct from national, interests. There is a strong feeling, that, however poorly the state governments have fulfilled many expectations, they still tend to prevent that disregard of local feeling which would result if there was complete centralization of government. Yet each year the ability of the state governments to supply our needs grows less, while the increasing efficiency of our national government renders it probable that the few remaining duties of the state governments will soon be practically transferred to Washington.* Nev-

* On the general subject of our State Government, see the article by Simon N. Patten, Ph.D., entitled "The Decay of State and Local Governments," published in the first number of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

ertheless, the feeling that we must have governments to represent local interests of the individual, and that the centralization of all law-making into the hands of one government would be a political catastrophe, is founded on sound principles of political science. There are local interests which need local governments to represent them. A nation which entrusted interests of particular localities to the national government would be as poorly governed as one which left the decision of national questions involving national interests to local governments. It is, therefore, vitally important to us to preserve our states or local governments. We can only do this by practically reconstructing our state lines, though we may not alter a word of our Constitution. Our great cities, and afterwards our agricultural or mining districts, should take the place of the irrationally defined states of to-day. We must realize that a person who lives in Philadelphia and one who lives in Pittsburg have no common interests which are not national, and therefore a government in Harrisburg stands for no community of interests, and is useless. But on the other hand, a government which shall represent all the inhabitants of the city, and have complete control over its local affairs is as essential to the welfare of the citizen as the national government at Washington. It is not that states are unnecessary, for they are essential, but that the geographical lines of our present states make it almost impossible that they should have efficient governments. If any country ever wanted "Home Rule" in the true sense of the term, it is our own. To have it, however, we should have local states to represent local interests, not state governments like our present ones, which are not local, and which certainly cannot be national. It may, indeed, be chimerical to believe that we who are now alive will see the political rise and development of the agricultural and mining local states, even if I am correct in my surmise that a community of local interests in such districts exist, but we certainly have a right to expect that we shall live to see our municipal governments recognizing what in the minds of the people will

have become clear and definite conceptions: namely, the local interests of the city, and the best way to advance those interests.

How then can we aid in the creation of the local municipal state of our own city, and make our municipality a model of progress. States, whether national or local, do not exist on paper, but in the minds of those who hold the sovereign power. It is often said that the conduct of a municipality is a business problem. In an administrative sense this is true, as it is true of all government. But it is also true that the creation of a model municipality is essentially a problem of political education. The people who hold the power must be educated politically. In the city of Philadelphia, for instance, they must know what Philadelphia is, her local interests and her possibilities. The organization of the persons to be educated is essential to all successful and permanent education, and especially to political education. Those who form themselves into committees and attempt to educate politically the rest of their fellow-citizens out of the excess of their own personal merit, show more zeal for good objects than knowledge of how to obtain them. The first thing to recognize in trying to remedy existing evils is the conditions under which we must work. Parties are essential to the success of political movements in the United States. People will not follow a Solomon merely because he advises them to do so, but they can be organized and educated for coöperation in a good cause. Thus, any organization which would make a city a model municipality must be one which will include in it the majority of the citizens. It is the people who must be educated: it is, therefore, the people who must be organized.

Again, since it is essential for the people to be educated politically, the organization must adopt that greatest of all political educators, political action.

The character of this political action will not be difficult to determine. If we suppose that there exists an organization of the people of the municipality, one of its main objects will

be the creation of a city government, which will stand, not for ideas of national policy, but for local interests. It necessarily follows that the political action of our supposed organization will be the election of a city government. To say that its candidates must be its own, and not those who represent ideas of national policy, which, while they do not conflict, have nothing in common with the affairs of the city, would seem unnecessary, had it not heretofore been the practice of those organizations which avowedly stood for the interests of the city, to endeavor by indorsement to obtain the election of some candidate who represented one of our two great national parties. There is a fatal inconsistency in telling a citizen that national and city politics should be distinct, and then asking him to vote for the nominee to a city office of the national party to which he is opposed. As a matter of fact, although defeat in a city of one national party by the other often has little or no effect on the stability of that party in national elections, there may be circumstances in which such a defeat would be peculiarly disastrous. By this I do not wish to be taken as discountenancing independent voting in city politics, but simply to point out the folly of attempting to create a permanent political body whose political action is the indorsement of the nominees of other political bodies, from which the indorsing organization pretends to be distinct. An indorsement by such bodies as the Committee of Fifty of Philadelphia is the effort to elect a particular candidate. With the election their work is done, and they should pass out of existence. Did they do so, it would indicate that their members recognized the self-evident fact that all permanent political organizations must represent ideas and not candidates.

That such organizations as the old Committee of One Hundred, in Philadelphia, accomplished no good, I do not wish for a moment to assert. But too often their good was accomplished, like most Mugwump movements, at a sacrifice on the part of individual members of all earnest conviction on national party questions. As permanent factors in the pro-

gress of our cities such movements have always failed. To-day, as a warning to all those who in the future would seek to take similar municipal political action, we find their traces only in the pessimistic feeling of the ex-members, that parties are a necessary evil. Necessary they are, indeed ; but the spirit which regards a mechanism essential for all political action, whether good or bad, as an evil, is not only illogical but exceedingly harmful. By driving all good men out of party and out of politics, it tends to perpetuate the very state of affairs which is deplored.

If we are to have city elections free from national politics, we must get national parties out of city elections. The organization which is to make a municipality progressive, or even hopes to establish itself on a permanent basis, must therefore drive national parties from the sphere of city politics, by electing the men who represent the fundamental ideas of the organization, and not try to perpetuate the existence of such parties in city politics by bribing national party bosses, who owe their existence to the loaves and fishes of city office, to nominate particular candidates.

The first step in the solution of local municipal government in the United States is, therefore, the formation in each city of a city party. Not that those who believe this should come together and call themselves a party. The name is immaterial, but the lines of the organization should be drawn in such a way that it will naturally develop into such a party.

The attitude of the individual towards the possibility of belonging to two political parties, a national and a local party, depends upon the clearness with which he separates, in his own mind, national and local interests; though it is not necessary that every one who would join a municipal party must actually be conscious of this separation. The fact of becoming a member simply indicates that he is willing to try the experiment of working in two parties. Since there are local interests which are distinct from national interests, the very fact of his working in the local party would serve to impress the member with the difference between

the locality and the nation. Once so impressed, all doubts of the feasibility of belonging to two distinct parties would disappear. There is another doubt which will occur to some, and which deserves an answer. It may be asked, Will not the same characteristics of the individual mind which lead one to belong to a particular national party cause him to join the city party which regards local issues from the same point of view? In other words, those who favor an active national government will likewise favor an active city government; while those who prefer a national government which is more or less passive, will also prefer a city government which does as little as possible. If this is so, the uselessness of separate party organizations for city affairs will be admitted. The correct answer to this objection must, I believe, be sought in the consideration of the degree of civilization which has been attained by the people. In the earlier stages of society, when economic conditions were such that man could obtain for himself almost all he desired without the aid of any organization, governmental or otherwise, only two political parties, based on the way in which the individual regarded the functions of government, were possible: namely, those who believed the government should do something, and those who believed that the government should do nothing. But as man's wants increased, all agreed that governments should do something more than maintain order in the country. Parties then begin to divide on the question of what government shall do. It becomes not only a possible, but a common occurrence, that one who believes in a city government maintaining hospitals, libraries, and all sorts of mechanical and industrial schools, may be very violently opposed to the national government seeking to regulate the price of commodities or the wages of labor. In fact, in many instances the very belief in the value of the work of the local government would lead one to doubt the value of an active national government. History affords us many examples of this. The separation of ideas renders it possible for the individual

to view from entirely different standpoints questions which at one time would have been looked at from the same point of view. The nineteenth century in our country has seen the complete separation of religious and political ideas. At one time a man who was conservative in religion was conservative in his politics as a matter of course. In England, to be a Radical was once considered equivalent to caring little for religion. The last few decades have brought with them a complete change. It is now no uncommon occurrence to find one who belongs to the most conservative of churches constantly adopting new ideas in national politics. This is the result of the complete separation of the religious, from the political and economic thought of the individual; and I believe that in the same way, when we have as complete a separation of our feelings towards local and national affairs, the same individual will regard national and local interests from a radically different point of view. It is needless to say that the separation of ideas I am speaking of involves no lack of interest either in religion or politics. In fact, a man who separates national from local questions, like one who separates religion from politics, is apt to take a more earnest and intelligent interest in both.

The problem of the government of our large cities is the most serious feature in our political development. No one of ordinary intelligence needs to be told that the men in city offices often fall far below the average intelligence and honesty of the people, and that the result in paving, in lighting, in education, and all other functions of a city government is so bad, that, as Americans, we should be heartily ashamed of it. The pollution of our city politics unavoidably contaminates the best members of our national parties, because it forces all who enter politics to associate with men who join the national party, not from any deep-seated conviction of the importance of its national policy to the country, but from the desire to participate in the plunder of some city office. And yet, as I have tried to point out,

if we would remedy this state of affairs, so threatening to the welfare of our country, we must strive for something more than a change of candidates: we must have a revolution of ideas.

Let us recognize that the cause of the corruption in our politics, and the poor administration in local affairs, is not the lack of moral sense on the part of the community, or the want of capacity for government, but in what we call our political mechanism. The parties' spoils system makes it possible for one to gather around him "workers," who labor, not for the love of country or honorable ambition, but for the hope of office. In the same way a city official is usually elected and retained in the city office, not because the city has been well governed, but because he pretends to represent in city politics certain national issues. When, however, we make a distinction between the things which are local and those which are national, the main cause of maladministration in our local affairs will disappear, and we shall hear no more of the nonsense which prates of failure of democratic institutions in large cities. It is not our institutions, but the mechanism through which the individual citizen is educated in political ideas, which is at fault. Our states, which constitutionally should represent local interests, are so geographically distributed that it is impossible for them to do so, and our political parties, being only able to divide on national issues, are not held responsible for bad local administration.

Our conclusion is, that those who would benefit their country and the local state in which they live, must strike at the cause which enables men to succeed who enter politics to obtain office, by educating the people of their locality to a realization of the fact that the city has its local interests, which can only be permanently advanced by a government which will stand on its own merits, and not on the prestige of a national policy which it is falsely supposed to represent.

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